

Charlton's superb saves earn Bournemouth second chance

ONE MAN stood between Wycombe Wanderers and their first ever place in the third round of the F.A. Cup on Saturday. He was Kevin Charlton, the Bournemouth goalkeeper, who pulled off three brilliant saves to earn the Third Division Club a replay at Dean Court tomorrow (Wednesday).

And yet, having been on the receiving end of some considerable Wycombe pressure for most of the second half, Bournemouth could have found themselves playing Middlesbrough at the first attempt on January 4 in the next round. They broke out of defence in the 84th minute and home keeper John Maskell had to pull out two wonder saves in the space of five seconds to keep the scoresheet blank.

A goal then would have been a travesty to Wycombe who, after a scrappy first half, took the game by the scruff of the neck and threw all they had at Bournemouth. The only reason the visitors survived was the performance of Charlton.

His first superb save came from Paul Birdseye in the closing stages of the first half and then in the second, he fisted over a real pildriver from Howard Kennedy while in mid-air. Lastly, he managed to parry another powerful effort by Mick Holfield, who saw his shot then kicked off the line.

Any of those would have beaten many other goalkeepers but on Saturday, Charlton looked unbeatable. He certainly lived up to Brian Lee's pre-match rating. The Wanderers manager had said: "His reaction saves are first class and his handling of the ball is excellent."

Despite Charlton's brilliance, though, Wanderers must be a trifle disappointed not to have seen this match up at the first attempt. There were several scoring opportunities that went untaken plus a penalty appeal turned down by referee Lees.

The man who threatened most danger was Steve Perrin. After a slow start to the season, Steve is now at his best and on half-a-dozen occasions he left

the Bournemouth defence trailing. His endeavour deserved greater reward. Tony Horseman was also impressive and rarely wasted the ball.

The one disappointment was Keith Searle. Marked by former Wycombe skipper John Delaney, Keith found the sticky conditions very difficult and his lack of pace was sometimes badly exposed.

While the defence was always sound, with Gary Hand once again in great form on the left flank, perhaps the men who deserve the most credit are the midfield trio. Howard Kennedy, Terry Reardon and Mick Holfield worked like trojans to stamp their authority on the game. Kennedy's distribution was often of the highest class while Holfield after a painfully slow start, was the one man who looked most likely to decide the issue.

Whether Wycombe can match or improve on their performance in the replay remains to be seen. But having contained the Bournemouth attack with something to spare throughout Saturday's 90 minutes, they must feel confident of a good result tomorrow, especially with the incentive of a home tie with Middlesbrough in the next round!

With Keith Mead declared fit on Friday, Wanderers were at full strength. They called up Dave Bullock as substitute to cover for a possible Mead breakdown while Bournemouth made one unexpected change, bringing in John Wingate upfront for the injured John O'Rourke. This probably weakened their strike power as O'Rourke is by far the club's most experienced player.

The first half was one long tussle for supremacy with neither goalkeeper seriously tested in the opening 30 minutes, which were strangely quiet for a Cup tie. There was the odd moment of excitement, like in the second minute when Hand crossed from the left but just too far for the strikers and then Howard Goddard, Bournemouth's 17 year old

centre forward drove weakly at Maskell after a 1-2 with Brian Greenhalgh.

Wycombe won their first corner after six minutes but again the cross was too strong and eluded the mass of players in the penalty area. Then with 11 minutes gone, Les Parodi stole in behind the defence to glance a header goalwards, but again

Maskell was on hand to gather with ease.

Much of the first half, however, was kept at long range by both defences. Neil Hague was always on hand to clear any Wycombe danger while Alan Phillips, although given a few anxious moments by Wingate, cleared up well at the back for Wycombe.

What was promising, was the amount of space Wanderers found for themselves and the amount of possession won by Reardon and Hand. Often these two came out with the ball after 50-50 situations.

In the 27th minute, however, Wanderers showed their first sign of weakness in defence. From a free kick on the left, Parodi floated in a curling cross which Wycombe failed to clear inside the box. Delaney almost took the ball through and then Goddard thumped the underside of the bar with the Blues at sixes and sevens. Fortunately, the referee's whistle brought the scramble to a close with Bournemouth penalised for off side.

A good example of Searle's lack of pace came on the half hour. Delaney, made skipper for the day against his old club, slipped as he went to control the ball which gave Searle a yard's start. Keith, however, did not make the best of the situation and halted the move and lost possession when confronted by two defenders.

The seven minutes before half time belonged almost exclusively to Wycombe. With 38 minutes gone, Perrin broke through despite being held back by Keith Miller. Forced to a narrow angle Steve took the ball on and was

only stopped by Charlton's brave save at the striker's feet. A minute later Holfield drove wildly at a cross from Hand and ballooned the ball well over the top.

The two best chances of the half came in the last three minutes. Once again Perrin created the opening with another surging run, beating three defenders before turning

the ball inside to Horseman. "Bodger" was unable to get in a shot but the ball came out to Paul Birdseye who aimed his drive towards the top corner.

Charlton, however, made the first of his three memorable saves by tipping the ball over the top. Then a minute later, from the second corner, Charlton made about his only mistake of the game. He came out to take Horseman's flag kick but missed contact completely. The ball struck a defender and bounced over to Perrin who had the goal at his mercy, five yards out. But in trying to head high into the net, Steve could only send the ball fractionally over the crossbar.

The half time whistle went soon after that move and Wycombe were left to reflect just how valuable a goal at that stage could have been. Nevertheless, it showed some weakness in the visitors' defence and with Wanderers kicking towards their own fans in the second half, there was still everything to play for.

Bournemouth began the second period with a flourish and twice Phillips and Mead had to hastily clear the danger. For Mead, the game became more painful as it went on and he did well to finish the 90 minutes.

Horseman was unable to get in a shot as the defence converged in the 51st minute and then Delaney, who with Hague came up for every set piece, saw a header bounce past the far post three minutes later. It was the only time 'Big John' threatened from such a move.

The pitch, soaked by Saturday morning's rain, had cut up considerably by this stage and meant that Wycombe's main at-

tacking ploy, the ball through the centre of the defence, was rarely effective. In the later stages, however, they managed to overcome the conditions and used the through ball well, giving the Bournemouth defence a real grilling. They also stretched their game wide, using the wings to good effect.

It was from a ball through the centre that Wycombe almost

broke through in the 69th minute. Horseman cleverly deflected a ball from midfield right into the path of Holfield. Half a yard clear of Hague, Mick was unceremoniously brought down from behind just outside the box. Two Wycombe men joined the defensive wall for the free kick but Charlton anticipated Horseman's 'bender.'

Then seconds later Kennedy won the ball in midfield and slipped a pass through the defence for Horseman who took the ball on but he failed to get his full power into the shot and Charlton saved at the second attempt. Many felt Tony had been tripped while taking the ball, but Mr. Lees waved aside the penalty appeals.

At this stage there was no stopping Wycombe. They were rarely out of the Bournemouth half for the next 10 minutes and with a combination of fine passing and running, they had the visitors distinctly rattled. With 73 minutes gone Horseman again found himself in with a chance. Taking the ball down, he delayed his shot as Charlton advanced and then tried to loft the ball over the 'keeper. But the lob hit Charlton's legs, enabling him to gather at the second attempt.

Charlton pulled off his most spectacular save in the 75th minute. Holfield outstripped the defence and took the ball to the by-line before crossing low into the box. The half clearance came out to Kennedy on the edge of the box and his sweetly struck drive looked a winner all the way until Charlton launched himself into the air to fist the ball over the top.

Charlton's save from

Kennedy must have been a killer for the Blues. Kennedy could hardly believe it and looked up to the heavens while the rest of the side could only have wondered just how they were going to beat this goalkeeper.

Even that wasn't the end of Charlton's activity. With 82 minutes gone Perrin won a corner. Horseman's kick was again only half cleared and this time fell to Holfield. From 10 yards Mick turned and lashed in a shot through the crowded goalmouth. Charlton couldn't gather cleanly but deflected the ball towards Payne who kicked another 'cert' off the line.

In those minutes of constant Wycombe attack, John Maskell had been watching intently at the other end without even a sniff of the ball. It was this inactivity that made his 84th minute saves even more commendable.

The man who started Bournemouth's closest effort was Alan Welsh. He sent a 50 yard crossfield ball down the slope to Greenhalgh, catching the home defence stretched to its limits. Birdseye, racing back, couldn't stop Greenhalgh slipping the ball inside to Goddard who hammered in a powerful drive. Maskell parried the shot but only as far as Parodi, following up. It looked a mere formality for the Bournemouth man, with Maskell still on the turf after his first save. But, showing lightning reflexes, John stuck out an arm and amazingly managed to hold the second shot to keep Wycombe in the game. A goal at that stage would have finished them for good.

With only a few minutes remaining Wycombe resumed their assault on the Bournemouth net but were unable to create anything clear-cut with the visitors well content to play out time — and no doubt extremely relieved to have a second chance of making the third round.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holfield, A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin. Sub. D. Bullock (not used).

BOURNEMOUTH: K. Charlton, C. Payne, N. Hague, J. Delaney, K. Miller, A. Welsh, T. Howard, L. Parodi, J. Wingate, H. Goddard, B. Greenhalgh. Sub. N. Merrick (not used).

Referee: A. R. Lees (Street).
Official attendance: 7,400.